

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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HANDLING DISCUSSION

TO : Department of State

INDEX : ATLANTA, ISLAMABAD, MOSCOW, NEW DELHI, TEBERAN, PESHAWAR, CHICAGO

FROM : Ambassador KADUL -
R.O. : 11652, GDS, TAGS
SUBJECT : POLITICAL SUGAR

REF

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- I. Internal Developments
II. Foreign Affairs
III. Coming and Goings

1. Internal Development

Political activity in February saw the further consolidation of control in the hands of President Douard.

Leadership and initiative on all major fronts seem now to have passed from the Central Committee and the Parchamists to the President. We have strong indications that Daud and his closest associates evidently feel themselves strong enough internally to begin the long-simmered move against the more radical leftist elements in the government that were forced upon them after the July 1973 coup. On February 27, the President delivered a stark and pointed lecture against all types of political party activity that is being widely interpreted throughout the Afghan body politic as a direct attack on the Parcham party and its supporters in government. Criticism of Parcham activities is now more open in conversation and the speech seems to have fueled a fresh batch of rumors, who have so far seen the demise of one Central Committee member, Minister of Frontier Affairs, Pacha Gul (nominated as Ambassador to Bulgaria), and several secondary officials.

Dasud has patiently maneuvered to get the stage box/water changes in personnel now strongly rumored to begin around November (Mighty New Year, March 21); and his rivals seem to be getting along themselves and

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on the defensive. He is definitely trying to restore the traditional balance in Afghan society that was upset after the July coup. As reported then, he has left his "revolutionary colleagues" alone to founder by themselves and prove their incompetency and inability to build popular support without his presence. Most factions in Afghanistan now appear to accept his primacy and Daud is poised to begin the long process of reducing, isolating or eventually removing, either singly or in groups, the more radical elements (and potential rivals) in his government.

As he has forcefully pointed out on many occasions, the President is a strong nationalist and intends to steer a careful course between East and West, taking assistance from all sides, leaning heavily towards autocratic state socialism but above all preserving Afghan independence and freedom of movement. He will probably continue to allow pro-Western and pro-Soviet individuals and forces to attack against each other within the government and society but will retain final authority and make most major decisions himself. Daud is well aware of the risk inherent in any increased reliance on the Russians; but he obviously believes himself strong enough and alert enough to control it, while having Afghanistan benefit from a large scale Soviet military and economic support.

Daud has moved to renew and strengthen ties with the United States. While some very serious problems remain, the public signing in February of the first two AID agreements since the coup (the Kabul University Project, and continuation of the large State University of New York Demographic project) were hailed with relief and gratification by many moderate Afghans as an affirmation of continued U.S. support for Afghanistan's independence. The signings were well publicized and have been interpreted as clear evidence that a continuing substantial US presence is desired by the Government of Afghanistan.

It must be borne in mind, however, that the situation is still quite fluid and subject to sudden change. Although in good health, Daud is in his mid-sixties and in this violent country the risk of assassination can never be discounted. Economic stagnation, the possibility of reduced food supplies stemming from a somewhat smaller cropfall this winter and the potential impact of increased costs of petroleum products and fertilizer will all present serious challenges to the Daud regime. Nevertheless, it is our conviction that in the months ahead the President will increasingly emerge as the sole leader of this nation and will guide its policies carefully and calculatedly to some middle ground that exists in his own mind between Western and

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II. Revised Affidavit

Acting with the confidence that his enhanced power at home allows, Daud is moving to restore a somewhat more active stance to Afghan foreign policy. Both he and his brother, Naim, are long time observers of the international arena and are anxious for Afghanistan to play a role in regional and world affairs. The government is now concentrating on building up its relations with India and has begun to re-establish the dialogue with Iran broken off after the coup. One of Daud's motives is probably an attempt to isolate Pakistan in the region, which, particularly in regard to Iran, we do not see as having much hope of success. The Afghans have also been told through a variety of channels that the Shah views Daud as the best hope for Afghanistan's independence and is willing to consider for yet unspecified economic and financial assistance. It will be difficult to overcome traditional Afghan xenophobia towards this larger and wealthier neighbor; but Daud appears willing to make the effort and is aware that Iran could be a substantial source of badly needed economic and financial support. A third motive, primarily in regard to India, is the Afghan desire to establish some other viable "presence" in Afghanistan as a counter to strong Soviet influence, especially in the military.

A) In410

Naim and Deputy Foreign Minister Wahid Abdullah were in New Delhi February 25-28 possibly discussing a variety of proposed Indian technical assistance projects. The Joint Indian-Afghan Economic Commission reportedly is scheduled to meet in March to finalize technical assistance arrangements, and an influx of Indian "experts" could follow shortly. In and of itself increased Indian influence in Kabul can be a broadening and stabilizing factor; but the possibility does exist that Daud may attempt to translate these strengthened ties into Indian support on some future Pashtunistan crisis.

B) Lead

After Wahid Abdullah's visit to Tehran in late January, on

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Afghan delegation visited Iran for further discussions on bilateral trade issues and we understand that Kain and Abdullah will return to Kabul sometime soon for further talks. The Afghans have expressed an interest in the Shah's various proposals for multinational support for developing nations (utilizing Iranian funds).

C. Pakistan

The Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore was created by the Afghans with a general show of indifference and employed as a publicity-seeking ploy on the part of President Shanto. One episode did fly over an exchange of remarks between Pakistani Interior Minister Qayyum Khan (in Peshawar) and the Afghan representative, Ambassador Farman (in Lahore); and the Afghans were rather upset with the Arabs for what they see as open support of Shanto and his "entourage". (To counter this, Kain, in late March, will go to Egypt, Algeria, Libya and Iraq to explain the new Republic's foreign policy, their troubles with Pakistan, and perhaps make a pitch for Arab financial support.) The Pakistanis seem to be holding just beneath the surface as Shanto realizes that Shanto's continued strength and complete domination of the Pakistani political scene, combined with the weakness of his own military forces, precludes any overt activities on his (Shanto's) part.

D. Soviet Union

February ended with a burst of congratulatory messages and meetings celebrating the 53rd anniversary (February 20) of the Soviet-Afghan Treaty of 1921. In an intensive public relations effort on both sides peaceful coexistence, tranquility of borders and friendly relations between the two neighbors were extolled. It was pointed out that Afghanistan had been the first to recognize the Soviet Republic, and Russia was the first to recognize Afghan Independence in 1920 and also the first to recognize the new Republic last July.

III. Greece and Spain

A. A Russian delegation arrived in mid-march for discussion on the 100,000,000 rouble credit for the Fourth Five-Year Plan (now near the end of its second year with most of the credit still unutilized). An agreement was signed on February 14 for an irrigation-water use survey of the Am Darya (Oxus River).

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D. Asis Ahmed, Pakistani Minister of State for Defense and Foreign Affairs, came to Kabul February 2-3 to deliver an invitation for the Lahore Summit. It was the first high-level meeting between Afghanistan and Pakistan since the July armistice and was amiable in nature but contained little of substance.

E. A Czechoslovakian delegation arrived to begin discussions on utilization of a \$20 million Czech credit. The team is surveying the feasibility of a trolley system for Kabul and other groups are expected soon to consider such projects as a cement plant, thermal electricity station and a refinery.

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